

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau(43) International Publication Date
14 December 2000 (14.12.2000)

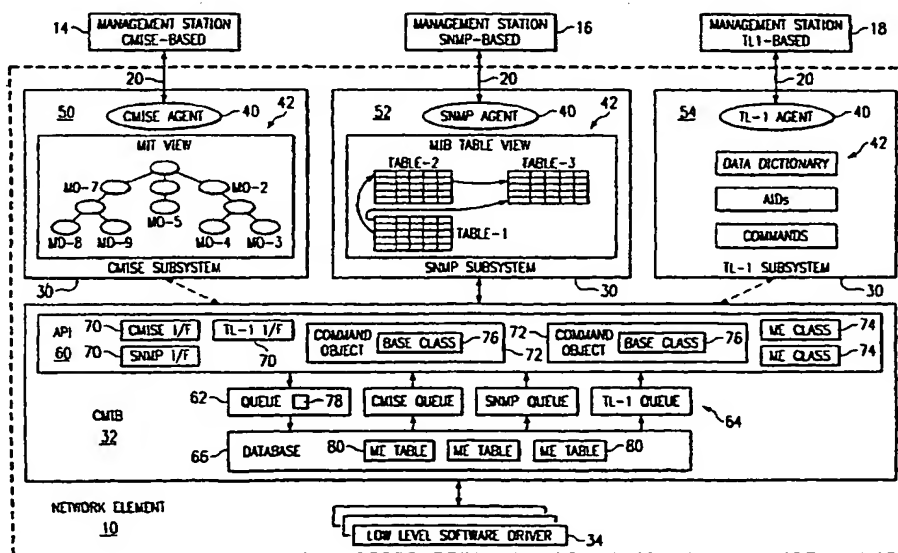
PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 00/76228 A1

- (51) International Patent Classification⁷: H04Q 3/00, H04L 12/24 (74) Agent: SHOWALTER, Barton, E.; Baker Botts L.L.P., 2001 Ross Avenue, Dallas, TX 75201-2980 (US).
- (21) International Application Number: PCT/US00/15335 (81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.
- (22) International Filing Date: 1 June 2000 (01.06.2000)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
- (30) Priority Data: 09/325,683 3 June 1999 (03.06.1999) US
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- (84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).
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- Published:
 --- With international search report.
 --- Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments.

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: NETWORK MANAGEMENT



(57) Abstract: In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, a network element comprises a first subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a first management protocol and to map the transactions to a common management protocol. A second subsystem is operable to receive management transactions in a second management protocol and to map the transactions to the common management protocol. A common management information base (MIB) includes a dataset and a common interface to the dataset. The common interface is operable to access the dataset to process transactions received from the first and second subsystems in the common management protocol.

WO 00/76228 A1



For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

NETWORK MANAGEMENT

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to telecommunications systems, and more particularly to a method and system for managing multiple management protocols in a network element.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Telecommunications systems include customer premise equipment (CPE), local loops connecting each customer premise to a central office (CO) or other node, nodes providing switching and signaling for the system, and internode trunks connecting the various nodes. The customer premise equipment (CPE) includes telephones, modems for communicating data over phone lines, computer and other devices that can directly communicate video, audio, and other data over a datalink. The network nodes include tradition circuit-switch nodes, which have transmission pass dedicated to specific users for the duration of a call and employ continuous, fixed-bandwidth transmission as well as packet-switch nodes that allow dynamic bandwidth, dependent on the application. The transmission media between the nodes may be wireline, wireless, or a combination of these or other transmission medias.

In a telecommunication system, the nodes are managed by standardized management protocols such as Transaction Language One (TL-1), simple network management protocol (SNMP), Common Management Information Service Element (CMISE), and the like. Generally speaking, each of these management protocols includes a protocol agent and object model. The agent is responsible for parsing the external

management commands and maintaining communication sessions with external management stations or users. The object model is a management information base (MIB). The MIB is a data structure built for a specific management protocol to exchange the management information between a node and external management stations.

Multiple protocol nodes that handle disparate types of traffic are typically required to support multiple management protocols such as TL-1, SNMP, and/or CMISE. Provision of multiple databases to support the different protocols requires large amounts of resources to implement the databases and maintain data integrity across the databases. One attempt to use a single database for multiple protocols configured the database in accordance with one protocol and used a protocol adapter for a second protocol. The protocol adapter translates protocol messages from the second protocol to the first protocol and responses back to the second protocol. Due to the incompatibility between management protocols, however, the adapter is a complex component that is expensive to implement. In addition, the adapter is inefficient due to the protocol translations, which slow down response time. Other attempts to support multiple management protocols with a single database provided only limited functionality for one of the protocols while creating special commands for the other. This solution is expensive to implement and provides only a partial solution.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a method and system for managing multiple management protocols in a network element that substantially eliminates or reduces problems associated with previous methods and systems. In particular, the common MIB provides a layer of abstraction to isolate internal data representations from data

representations made externally to a network element. This allows a network element to have a single, consistent internal representation of data, and at the same time, support multiple different external interfaces for management.

In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, a network element comprises a first subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a first management protocol and to map the transactions to a common management protocol. A second subsystem is operable to receive management transactions in a second management protocol and to map the transactions to the common management protocol. A common management information base (MIB) includes a dataset and a common interface to the dataset. The common interface is operable to access the dataset to process transactions received from the first and second subsystems in the common management protocol.

Technical advantages of the present invention include providing a protocol independent MIB for managing multi-protocol network elements within a telecommunications network. In particular, the common MIB provides a layer of abstraction to isolate data representations internal to the network element from data representations made externally to the network element. This allows the network element to have a single, consistent internal representation of data and at the same time support multiple different external interfaces for management. As a result, data integrity and consistency is guaranteed as only a single database is maintained.

To support multiple external data representations, the network element performs transformations to convert the data between the internal representation and the required external representation format. Thus, adaptation functions between management protocols is eliminated and each management protocol is capable to support complete

management of the network element. Moreover, the modular design of the common MIB allows for time and cost efficient testing, integration and packaging of the system.

Other technical advantages of the present invention will be readily apparent to one skilled in the art from the following figures, description, and claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a more complete understanding of the present invention and its advantages, reference is now made to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals represent like parts, in which:

FIGURE 1 is a block diagram illustrating a common management information base (MIB) in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 2 is a block diagram illustrating relationships between interface, base and managed entities (ME) classes in the common MIB of FIGURE 1 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 3 is a block diagram illustrating the ME command object of FIGURE 1 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention; and

FIGURE 4 is a flow diagram illustrating a method for performing a management transaction with the common MIB of FIGURE 1 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

FIGURE 1 illustrates management components of a multi-protocol network element (NE) 10 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, the NE 10 includes Internet Protocol (IP), Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM), and Synchronous Optical Network (SONET) layers and functionality and can communicate over

local area networks (LANs) as well as transmission line trunks. IP and other suitable traffic from the LAN is converted to ATM traffic for transmission by the SONET layer which forms the physical interface for the transmission line trunks.

The NE 10 supports Common Management Information Service Element (CMISE), simple network management protocol (SNMP), and Transaction Language One (TL-1) management protocols. A CMISE management station 14, SNMP management station 16, and TL-1 management station 18 are coupled to the NE 10 by a local area network (LAN), wide area network (WAN), or other communication link 20. Accordingly, the management stations 14, 16, and 18 may be local or remote from the NE 10.

Referring to FIGURE 1, the NE 10 includes a plurality of protocol-specific subsystems 30, a common management information base (MIB) 32, and a set of low level software drivers 34. Each subsystem 30 includes a protocol-specific agent 40 and a data model 42. The protocol-specific agent 40 parses external management commands and maintains communication sessions with external management stations or users. The data model 42 maps protocol-specific management transactions received from a management station to a common management protocol for processing by the common MIB 32. Accordingly, all protocol-specific processing is local to the subsystems 30, allowing the common MIB 32 to be protocol independent.

For the embodiment of FIGURE 1, the subsystems 30 include a CMISE subsystem 50 for supporting the CMISE management station 14, a SNMP subsystem 52 for supporting the SNMP management station 16, and a TL-1 subsystem 54 for supporting the TL-1 management station 18. The CMISE protocol is an OSI defined management service containing an interface with a user, specifying the service provided, and a protocol, specifying the protocol data unit format and

the associated procedures. In the CMISE subsystem 50, the data model 42 is a Guideline for Definition of Managed Object (GDMO) which is an OSI specification for defining a management information structure used in the CMISE environment. SNMP is an IETF defined network management protocol including definitions of a database and associated concepts. In the SNMP subsystem 52, the data model 42 is an entity-relationship model in accordance with SNMP standards. TL-1 is an ASCII or man-machine management protocol defined by Bellcore and typically used to manage broadband and access equipment in North America. In the TL-1 subsystem 54, the data model 42 includes a data dictionary for access identifiers (AIDs) and commands in accordance with TL-1 standards. In this way, the data models 42 only occupy a small amount of memory resources in the network element 10 and keep protocol-specific processing local to each subsystem 50, 52, or 54.

The common MIB 32 includes an application interface (API) 60, a transaction queue 62, a set of response queues 64, and a database 66. The API 60 provides generic management functionality to the CMISE, SNMP, and TL-1 subsystems 50, 52, and 54. As described in more detail below, the common MIB 32 provides an efficient and flexible component to allow a telecommunications device to be controlled and monitored by external interfaces using specific management protocols.

The API 60 includes an interface object 70 for each subsystem 30 registered with the API 60, one or more command objects 72 for each registered subsystem 30, and a set of managed entity (ME) classes 74 to which protocol-specific transactions are mapped by the subsystems 30. As described in more detail below, by applying object-oriented modeling techniques, the information of the hardware and/or software resource is encapsulated into the class

definition, which then provides service interfaces to other software components.

The interface objects 70 are each accessed by a corresponding subsystem 30 to communicate with the API 60.

5 The interface object 70 for a subsystem 30 is created by the API 60 upon registration by the subsystem 30. At that time, the subsystem 30 requests a number of command objects 72 that can be simultaneously used by the subsystem 30, which are generated and allocated by the API 60.

10 The command objects 72 each encapsulate a base class 76 for the ME classes 74. The ME classes 74 each include specific functionality for an ME type. The base class 76 includes function calls, methods, parameters, behaviors, and other attributes shared by all or at least some of the
15 ME classes 74. Accordingly, each command object 72 includes base functionality that is used by the ME classes 74 to access the database 66 or perform functions within the common MIB 32, such as communicating with the low level software driver 34 in order to determine or change the
20 state of hardware in the NE 10. As described in more detail below, portions of the base class 76 may be overloaded by specific ME classes 74 when forming an ME command object 78. The ME command object 78 forms an interface for accessing ME attributes and functions in the
25 database 66 and the low level software driver 34. In this way, each ME class 74 may select functionality from the base class 76 to be used in accessing the corresponding ME.

The transaction queue 62 stores ME command objects 78 generated by the API 60 in conjunction with the subsystems
30 30 for processing by the common MIB 32. In one embodiment, the transaction queue 32 is a first-in-first-out (FIFO) buffer that serializes processing in the common MIB 32 to prevent multiple operations from being performed at the same time, and thus prevent corruption of data, data
35 contention, and race conditions within the common MIB 32.

In the database 66, attributes for each of the ME types are stored in ME data structures 80. Preferably, the data structures are non-volatile structures to ensure data integrity. In one embodiment, the database 66 is a relational database and the ME data structures 80 are relational database tables. It will be understood that the ME attributes may be otherwise suitably stored without departing from the scope of the present invention.

The response queues 64 store responses to transactions processed by the common MIB 32. In one embodiment, the response queues 64 include a discrete queue for each subsystem 30. In this embodiment, each subsystem 30 reads responses in its corresponding queue 64 and extracts data for generating a protocol-specific response for transmission to the management station originating the transaction. It will be understood that responses to transactions may be otherwise made available by the common MIB 32 to the subsystems 30.

FIGURE 2 illustrates details of the object interfaces 70, command objects 72, and ME class objects 74 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, the objects 70, 72, and 74 are each fully instantiated objects encapsulating both data and behavior and inheriting data and behavior from parent classes.

Referring to FIGURE 2, the interface object 70 includes client callback, client quality of service (QoS), client command objects, and client interface parameters. The interface object 70 calls an associated command object 72 in the API 60.

The command objects 72 include command methods, command correlation, command errors, and command parameters. The command object 72 further inherits attributes of the base class 76. As previously described,

the base class 76 includes common ME attributes and common ME methods.

The ME class objects 74 each include functionality associated with a particular ME type. Such functionality includes ME attributes, methods, parameters, and behavior for the ME type. Attributes of an ME class 74 are inherited by the command objects 72 through the base class 76 to generate the ME command object 78. As previously described, the ME command object 78 provides an interface for accessing data and functionality in the common MIB 32.

FIGURE 3 illustrates details of an ME command object 78 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, the ME command object 78 is self contained. Any system resources obtained, such as memory or buffers are "owned" by the object 78 and released when the object 78 is destructed. It will be understood that the ME command object 78 may be otherwise suitably implemented for accessing data and attributes and common MIB 32.

Referring to FIGURE 3, the ME command object 78 includes a public data section 100 and a private data section 102. The public data section 100 of the ME command object 78 is accessible by the client subsystem 30. The public data section 100 includes method functions that hide the structure, data manipulation, and allocation details from the client subsystem 30. In addition, the methods in the public data section 100 respond to affects of the methods chosen and perform any command integrity checks required.

In one embodiment, the methods may include inline functions, particularly those used for setting and retrieving small (typically integer) attribute values. Attribute methods, for example, will be available to populate get/set/create commands, and to retrieve values resulting from the same. Constructor, invoker, and

releasor methods will be used to create, execute, and destroy ME command objects 78. Behavior methods are used by common MIB 32 to execute the commands.

5 The private data section 102 of the ME command object 78 includes data to complete the command. The response data for successful or error return will also be contained in the private data section 102. In one embodiment, any miscellaneous system resources dynamically allocated for the command are retained in the private data section 102.
10 This type of allocation is preferably minimized.

FIGURE 4 is a flow diagram illustrating a method for performing a management transaction in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, the transaction may be received from any one of the
15 plurality of management stations in a management protocol supported by the NE 10.

Referring to FIGURE 4, the method begins at step 110 in which subsystem 30 receives a transaction in a specific management protocol. Next, at step 112, the subsystem 30
20 maps the protocol specific transaction to a protocol independent ME class 74 which will be used by the common MIB 32 to perform the transaction. Mapping may include any suitable type of transaction, conversion, or associations. Accordingly, protocol specific processing is retained at
25 the subsystem level.

At step 114, the subsystem 30 opens a communications session with the API 60. As previously described, the session may be opened by calling an interface object 70 in the API 60 corresponding to the subsystem 30. Proceeding
30 to step 116, the subsystem 30 requests a command object 72 from the API 60. The subsystem 30 may use any number of command object 72 at a time up to the number allocated to the subsystem 30 in the API 60.

At step 118, the subsystem 30 identifies the protocol
35 independent ME class 74 to which the protocol specific

transaction was mapped. Next, at step 120, the API 60 generates and returns an ME command object 70 to the subsystem 30. As previously described, the ME command object 78 includes attributes of the base class 76 and the ME class 74. Portions of the ME class 74 may overload portions of the base class 76 to provide specific functionality in place of base functionality. At step 122, the subsystem 30 populates the ME command object 78 based on the transaction by calling command functions stored in the ME command object 78.

Proceeding to step 124, the populated ME command object 78 is transferred to the transaction queue 62 in common MIB 32 for processing. The transaction queue 32 serializes processing in common MIB 32 to prevent data contention between co-pending ME command objects 78. At step 126, the ME command object 78 is removed from the transaction queue 62 and executed by the common MIB 32. During execution, the ME command object 78 accesses the corresponding ME table 80 and/or performs functions in accordance with functions, behaviors, and parameters in the ME command object 78 which are based on the transaction.

Next, at step 128, the common MIB 32 generates a response in accordance with the function calls in the ME command object 78. At step 130, the response is transferred to the response queue 64 for the subsystem 30 that generated the ME command object 78. Next, at step 132, the subsystem 30 extracts data from the response and generates a protocol specific response for transfer back to the requesting management station. At step 134, the subsystem 30 releases the command object 72 back to the API 60. In this way, the common MIB 32 provides a layer of abstraction to isolate data representations internal to the network element 10 from data representations made externally to the network element 10. Data integrity and

consistency is guaranteed as only a single database is maintained.

5 Although the present invention has been described with several embodiments, various changes and modifications may be suggested to one skilled in the art. It is intended that the present invention encompass such changes and modifications as fall within the scope of the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A network element, comprising:

5 a first subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a first management protocol and to map the management transactions to a common management protocol;

a second subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a second management protocol and to map the second transactions to the common management protocol; and

10 a common management information base (MIB) comprising a dataset and a common interface to the dataset, the interface comprising software stored in a computer-readable medium and operable to access the dataset to process transactions from the first and second subsystems in the common management protocol.

15 2. The network element of Claim 1, further comprising:

20 a third subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a third management protocol and to map the transactions to the common management protocol; and

the common interface operable to access the dataset to process transactions received from the third subsystem in the common management protocol.

25 3. The network element of Claim 1, further comprising the first subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a Common Management Information Service Element (CMISE) protocol and to map the transaction to the common management protocol.

4. The network element of Claim 1, further comprising the first subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a simple network management protocol (SNMP) and to map the transactions to the common management protocol.

5. The network element of Claim 1, further comprising the first subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a Transaction Language One (TL-1) protocol and to map the transactions to the common management protocol.

6. The network element of Claim 2, further comprising:

the first subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a Common Management Information Service Element (CMISE) protocol and to map the transactions to the common management protocol;

the second subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a simple network management protocol (SNMP) and to map the transactions to the common management protocol; and

the third subsystem operable to receive management transactions in a Transaction Language One (TL-1) protocol and to map the transactions to the common management protocol.

7. The network element of Claim 1, wherein the dataset is stored in a table format.

8. The network element of Claim 1, the common management information base (MIB) further comprising:

a function set; and

the common interface operable to execute the common functions to process transactions received from the first and second subsystems in the common management protocol.

9. The network element of Claim 1, the common management information base (MIB) further comprising:

a queue operable to store transactions received from the first and second subsystems in the common management protocol; and

the common interface operable to serially process transactions from the queue.

10. The network element of Claim 1, the common management information base (MIB), further comprising:

a first subsystem queue operable to store responses to transactions received from the first subsystem in the common management protocol;

a second subsystem queue operable to store responses to transactions received from the second subsystem in the common management protocol; and

the common interface operable to generate responses to transactions and to store each response in the subsystem queue of a subsystem from which the transaction was received.

11. A method for managing a network element, comprising:

mapping management transactions received in a first management protocol to a common management protocol;

5 mapping management transactions received in a second management protocol to the common management protocol;

storing management information in a common dataset; and

10 accessing the common dataset to process transactions in the common management protocol.

12. The method of Claim 11, further comprising mapping management transactions received in a third management protocol to the common management protocol.

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13. The method of Claim 12, further comprising: mapping management transactions received in a Common Management Information Service Element (CMISE) protocol to the common management protocol;

20 mapping management transactions received in a simple network management protocol (SNMP) to the common management protocol; and

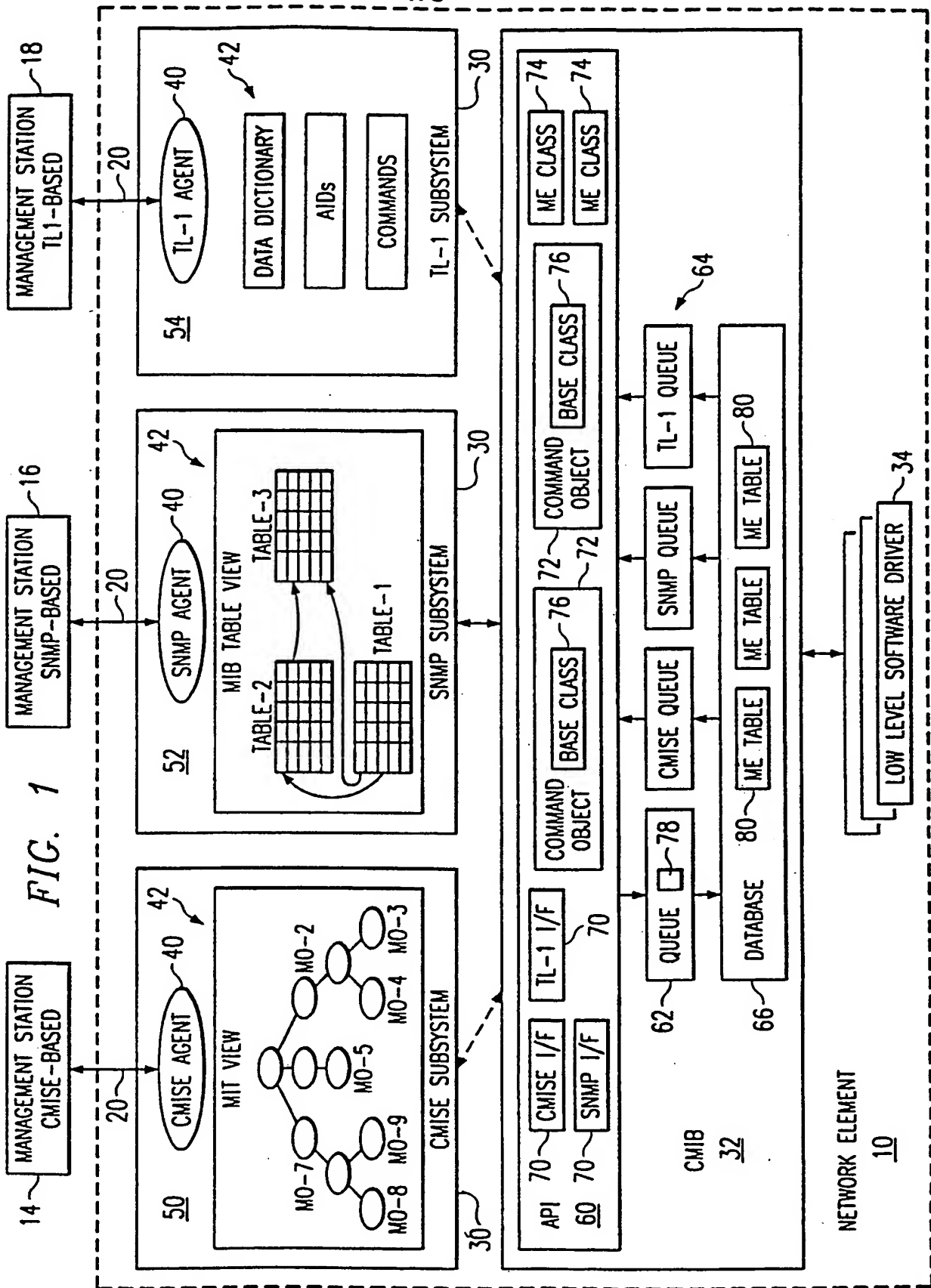
25 mapping management transactions received in a Transaction Language One (TL-1) protocol to the common management protocol.

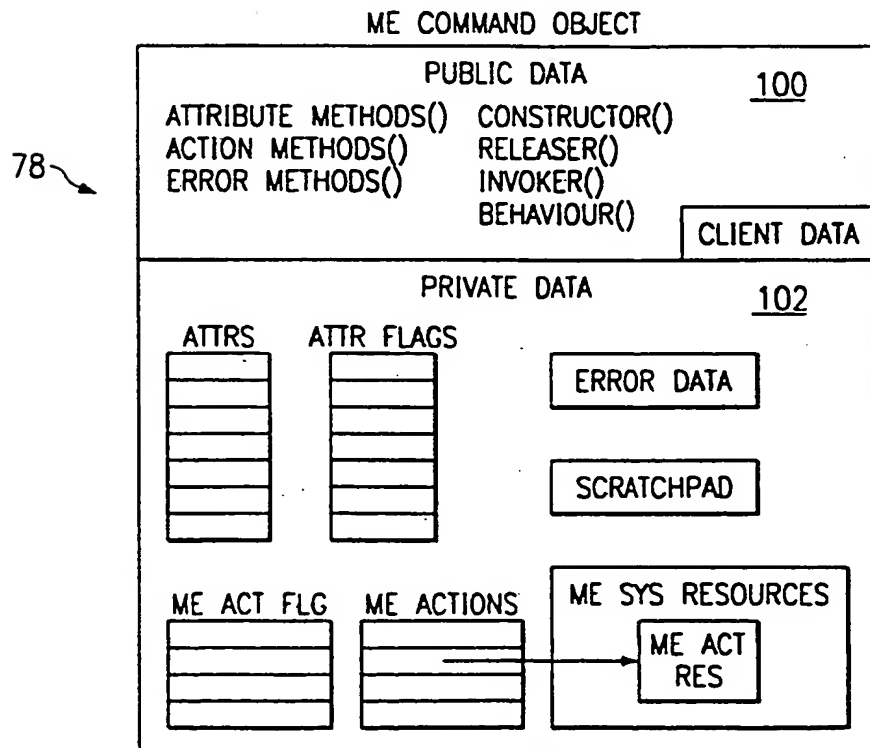
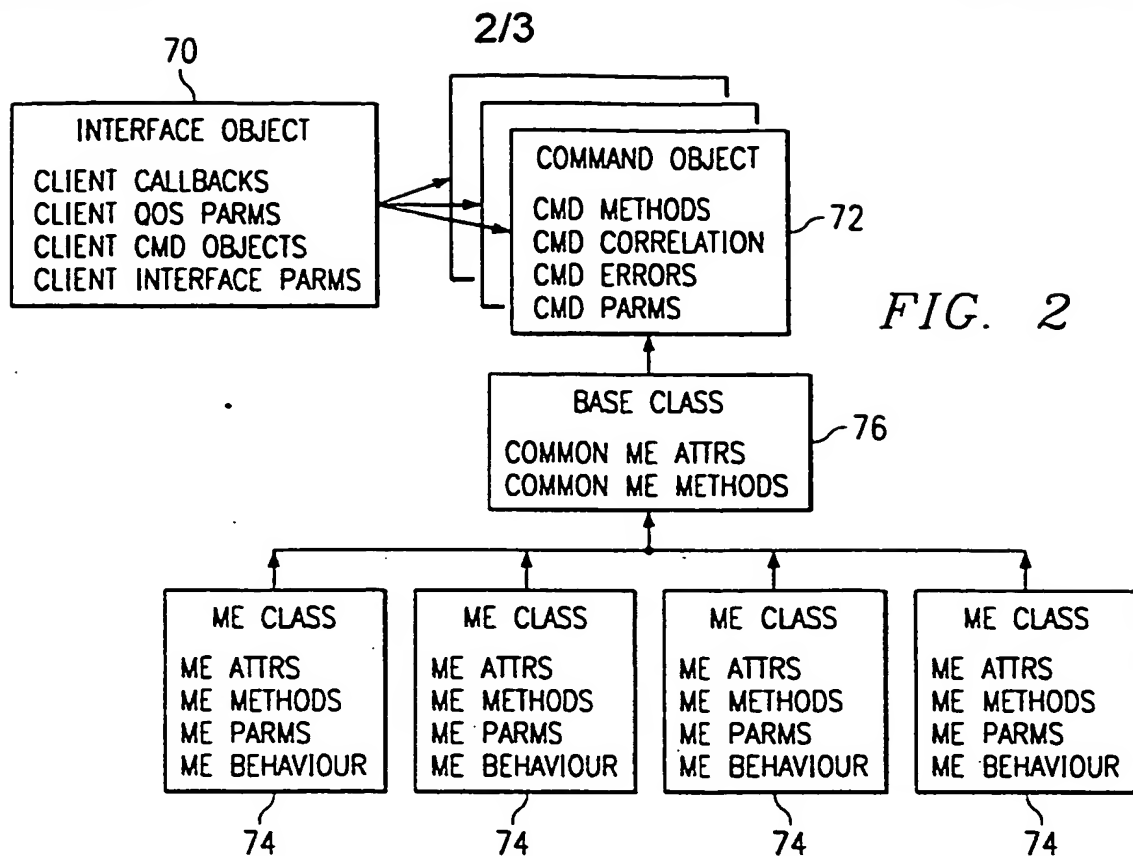
14. The method of Claim 11, further comprising: storing a dataset in a non-volatile memory; and
30 accessing the dataset in the non-volatile memory to process transactions in the common management protocol.

15. The method of Claim 11, further comprising:
storing a common function set; and
accessing the common function set to process
transactions received in the common management protocol.

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16. The method of Claim 11, further comprising
serially processing transactions in the common management
protocol.





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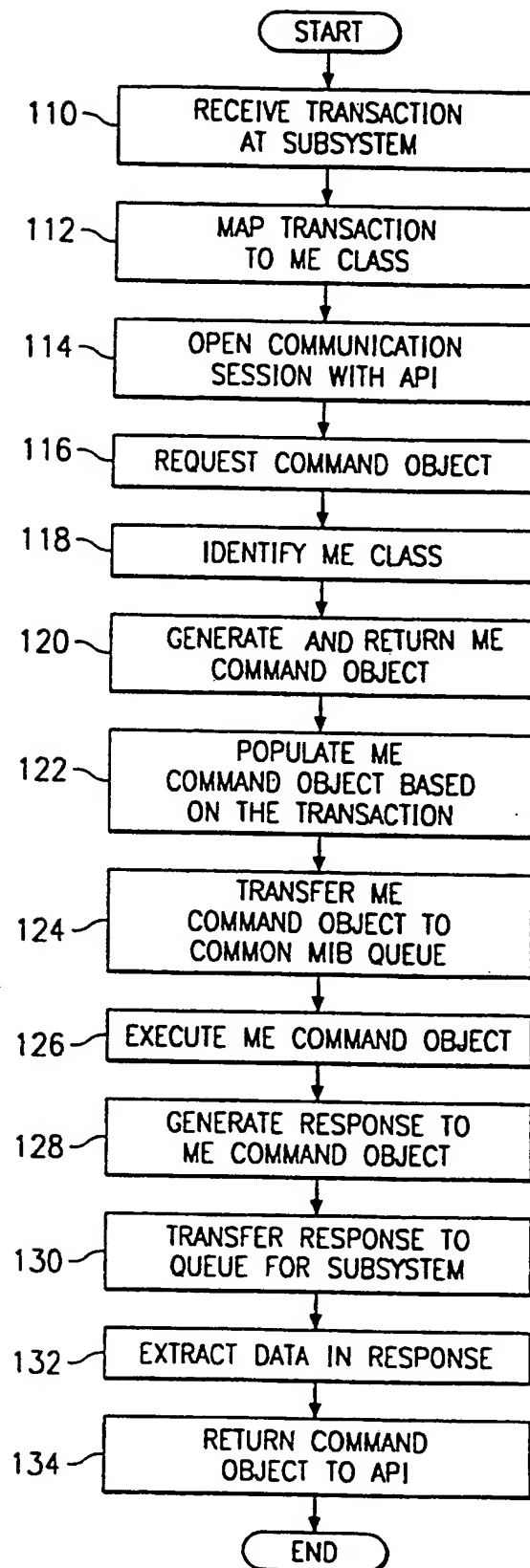


FIG. 4

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Internat Application No

PCT/US 00/15335

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 H04Q3/00 H04L12/24

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 H04Q H04L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ, INSPEC

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5 822 569 A (MCPARTLAN MAURA E ET AL) 13 October 1998 (1998-10-13) column 1, line 43 -column 2, line 24 claims 1-13 ---	1-16
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Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.



Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- *E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- *L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
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- *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- *Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.
- *G* document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

16 October 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

24/10/2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/US 00/15335

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